

Ripped from the ROUNDUP

Ripped straight from the pages of old Space News Roundups, here's what happened at JSC on this date:

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Apollo VIII, a six-day lunar orbit mission in the step-by-step buildup to a manned U.S. lunar landing, is scheduled for launch tomorrow at 6:51 a.m. from Cape Kennedy, Fla. The mission will fly the identical profile that will be flown on lunar landing missions with the exception of actual descent and landing on the lunar surface.

The prime objective of the Apollo VIII mission is to prove the capability of the Apollo command and service modules in the type of mission for which they were designed – operations at lunar distance. Earlier developmental Apollo earth-orbital manned and unmanned flights have qualified all the spacecraft systems – including the command module heatshield at lunar return speeds – and the Apollo VII 10-day failure-free mission in October demonstrated that the spacecraft can operate for the lunar mission duration.

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Flight controllers will continue tracking Skylab at Mission Control Center, but efforts to reboost the space station or control its re-entry will be discontinued, John Yardley, associate administrator for STS, said in a December 19 press conference on the Skylab mission termination.

The past months' effort has been "a rather spectacular technological melodrama," Yardley said, and he commended the people who have been able to "keep it operating as long as we have."

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After a scrub one day earlier due to uncooperative weather, *Atlantis* thundered aloft Friday morning, less than 90 seconds before the end of its designated launch period.

Atlantis lifted off from Kennedy Space Center's Launch Pad 39B at 8:30:34 a.m. CST in what many called one of the most spectacular launches of the Shuttle Program to date due to clear, crisp autumn weather.

After four days, nine hours and five minutes in flight, Commander Hoot Gibson made perfect marks as he brought *Atlantis* to a smooth landing at Edwards Air Force Base Tuesday afternoon.



JSC implements Goal Performance Evaluation System



JSC Photo 98-14544 by Benny Benavides

Marcus Friske, Information Systems Directorate, was a key player in implementing the Goal Performance Evaluation System at JSC within a tight three-month schedule.

The Goal Performance Evaluation System, JSC's new tool for employee performance planning and appraisal, was effectively implemented in just a little more than three months.

"Generally, we expect a change of this magnitude to take a while to set in, but managers have embraced this system," reports Harvey Hartman, director of Human Resources at JSC. Perhaps that's because the system is not only easy to use, but it helps bridge the gap from the NASA Strategic Plan to employee performance plans.

Tying employee performance objectives to the NASA Strategic Plan in a user-friendly way was a primary objective of system developers at the Kennedy Space Center. Lesa Roe, Jennifer Kunz and Chris Carlson – engineers in KSC's Space Station Hardware Integration Office – point to NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin's March 1998 statement as the theme for GPES: "All NASA employee plans address the goals that are stated in the

NASA Strategic Plan and reflect and address metrics as stated in the cognizant strategic enterprise plans and center implementation plans." After using the system for one year at KSC, Roe, Kunz and Carlson showcased their tool to the Office of Space Flight Management Board in May and then to Goldin and the center directors at the Headquarters Senior Management Council in June.

After learning about the system, JSC Director George Abbey invited Kunz to JSC for the June 29 senior staff meeting, where she presented a history of GPES, project lessons learned and a demo of the system. Shortly thereafter, a small implementation team was convened to plan and see through the implementation of KSC's GPES at JSC.

"We wanted to mirror KSC's grassroots approach and implement this system using a team of employees from across the center," explained Greg Hayes, deputy director of Human Resources, who oversaw implementation along with Jim Jaax (Engineering Directorate), Jon Harpold

(Mission Operations Directorate), and Lyn-Gordon Winkler (International Space Station Program). "That approach worked well. The implementation team developed a good project plan and an effective marketing strategy. With a 'champion' from every organization, it was easier to get the word out about the system."

In September, these "champions" briefed their managers about the system, explaining what GPES is, why it is being used and how it works. Then, in an effort to spread the word to employees, tri-fold brochures were delivered to all JSC civil servants in October. The brochures provided information about GPES along with points of contact for each organization.

"Since supervisors were asked to build all of their performance plans in the month of October, we wanted to give employees some information about GPES," explained Sally Branson, the GPES Implementation Team's marketing lead. "To take that a step further, briefings were held in November for employees who were interested in learning more about the system and its features."

"I really like the new system," said Estella Gillette, director of Equal Opportunity Programs. "I think it's designed to be short and to the point, with room for elaboration, and I like it because we helped design our own pieces. The new system will help me develop plans quickly, and I'll be able to include measurables that are very relative to the objectives and goals that are directly related to our piece of the strategic plan."

The positive reception of GPES is due, in large part, to the work of the GPES Implementation Team and the organizational champions. "Thanks to the efforts of a great number of folks, we've taken a good first step in implementing GPES. But our work is not done. We must sustain the positive momentum we've generated and improve the system over time. We're going to seek feedback from employees and managers alike to make sure we stay on track," promised Hartman.

GPES performance plans for all employees should now be in place. Midterm discussions are scheduled for January 1999, while final appraisals will be due in August of 1999.

Comments or suggestions on GPES may be submitted to organization champions or to Brady Pyle of the Human Resources Office at x32012.

For more information about GPES, check out the GPES homepage at <http://gpes.jsc.nasa.gov>. ■

JSC holiday events set for December

JSC's celebration of the holiday season begins at 11:15 a.m. December 1 with a "Toys for Tots" ceremony taking place in the Building 3 cafeteria when JSC Director George W. S. Abbey and Astronaut Captain Charles Hobaugh join the U.S. Marine Corps in kickoff festivities for 1998.

The program has received tremendous support from JSC employees in the past, and it is anticipated that the response to this year's campaign will be even greater. A barrel will be placed in the cafeteria to receive toy donations, so please take the opportunity to support this worthwhile endeavor.

JSC's "Holiday Extravaganza" event will also begin on December 1 and run through December 23, with daily entertainment during the lunch

hours from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Building 3 cafeteria. Music and entertainment for the holiday season will be performed each day by such groups as Aldersgate Praise, South Houston High School's chamber choir, Madison High School's concert choir, San Jacinto College's Department of Music, Clear Brook High School's "Company B," and J. Frank Dobie High School's "JFD Chamber Choir."

In addition, JSC or contractor employees interested in sharing their particular musical talents with the NASA family are invited to contact the Equal Opportunity Programs Office at x30601 concerning details of the event. All employees are encouraged to attend these performances. ■

Employee Assistance Program announces new seminar

The Employee Assistance Program is offering a brown bag luncheon seminar titled "Tools for Preserving Your Relationship" from 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. December 16 in the Building 30 auditorium. Peggy Halyard will conduct the seminar.

This one-hour seminar will discuss the latest studies on successful skills for enriching and maintaining long-term relationships. Tools to help you communicate more effectively, manage conflict and enhance fun and friendship in your relationship will be presented. Warning signs in relationships and ways to avoid unhealthy patterns will also be discussed.

The EAP is also offering three support groups: one for partners of traveling employees, another on behavioral modification for those who are experiencing difficulty in weight control and a third one for caregivers who are dealing with aging parents or an older parent.

Contact the EAP at x36130 to participate or to obtain details. ■